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his task and stands at salute while Old Glory is brought down for the night. You look up and see the Stars and Stripes waving in the breeze. Ah! slowly she lowers in majesty, "The Land of the Free, and the Home of the Brave!"

And so, the Red Cross gives us an opportunity to do our "bit" in the Navy, and we are doing it with all possible joy and willingness, for each one feels grateful to have the chance right here, at Pelham Bay.

THE VALUE OF A LABORATORY IN AN EXTRA CANTONMENT ZONE

BY EMILY C. SNIVELY, R.N.

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The day has long since passed when a physician can look at your tongue, feel your pulse, ask you where you feel badly, and then write a prescription. Modern medicine requires the result of a modern laboratory in diagnosing disease. The physician and nurse who have always had a laboratory at hand perhaps cannot realize what it means to smaller communities which have never had the definite knowledge and results one can thus obtain.

A great many lay people have about as definite a knowledge of bacteria as the father who was engrossed in his newspaper when his small son asked, "Daddy, what is bacteria anyway?" After repeating the question, a habit children have, the father looked up and said, "Oh, just little wiggling bugs; in Germany they call them germs, in France they call them parasites, and in Ireland they call them microbes; just bugs, son, just bugs." I believe in the case of bacteria, "nationality" is one thing that would not count, but "family" would. It certainly makes a great difference about the pedigree of the bug.

Even the best diagnosticians do not depend upon clinical symptoms, but find out absolutely by laboratory tests the family to which the bug belongs.

A case came to my attention recently where a sick child was gone over thoroughly by an able diagnostician. From clinical symptoms he thought the case poliomyelitis. The work in the laboratory proved it meningitis. By this definite knowledge the child was saved.

With each unit a laboratory is one of the first things deemed necessary, and one is established as soon as possible.

When necessity demands, as it did in our extra-cantonment zone with a typhoid epidemic raging, the U. S. Public Health Service or the American Red Cross sends a laboratory car all equipped to take

care of all bacteriological work until the local laboratory can be established. With the accurate work of the laboratory, an epidemic of meningitis in the next county, which caused four deaths before the local physicians called for help, was controlled.

Just today our door bell rang and a dear little voice said, "Are the Red Cross nurses here?" Upon being answered in the affirmative, the questioner held out flowers, fruit and candy and said, "These are for them." It was the same little lad whom we had held in January for seven spinal punctures; no guess work about this case, every specimen was tested, not a dose more or less than needed. The result was beautiful.

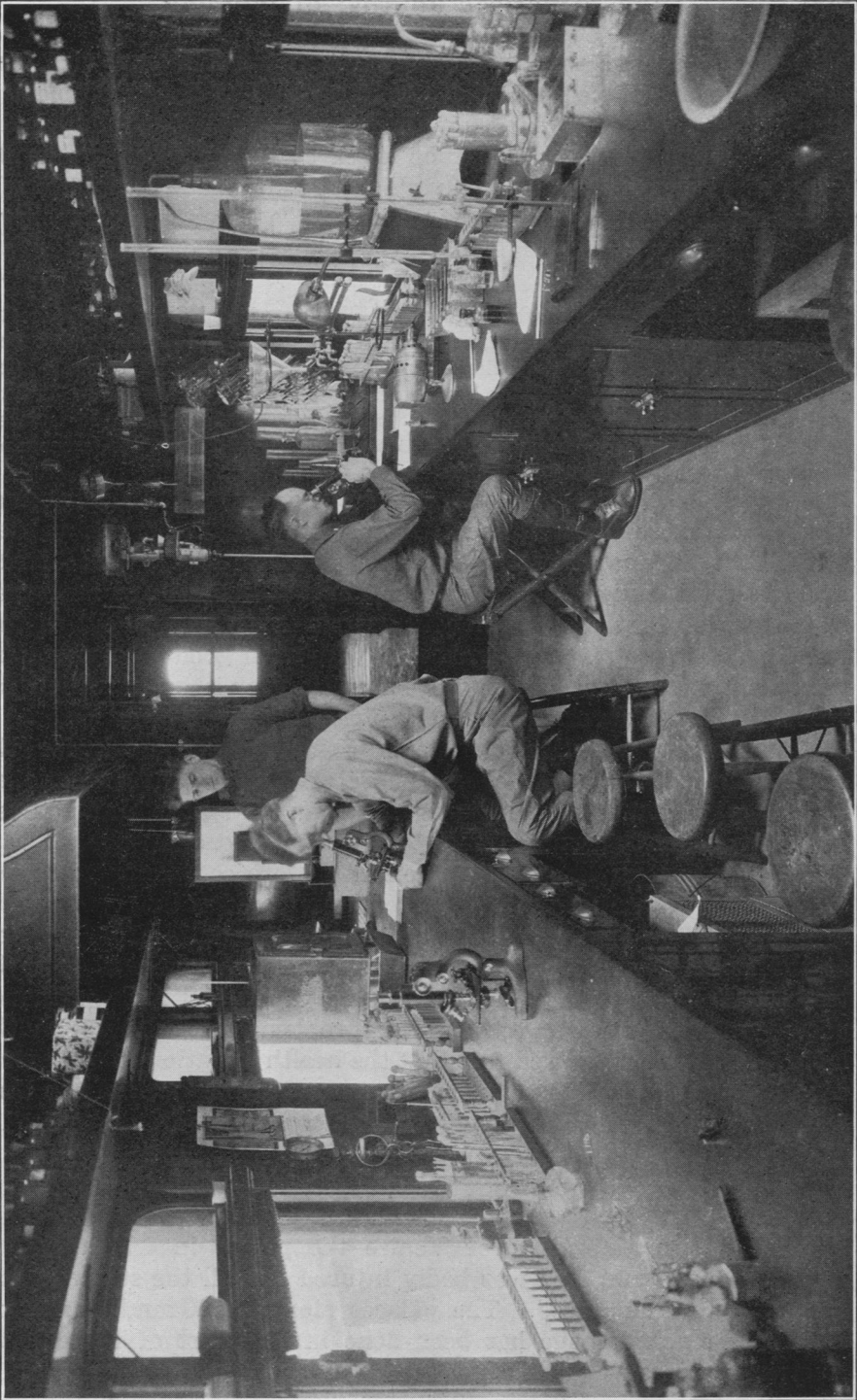
The laboratory test is the only positive proof of diphtheria. A dreadful looking throat may prove negative, while one not at all suspicious looking may be positive. The taking of throat and nose cultures by the nurse is a very important part of her work, both for diphtheria and meningitis.

The actual knowledge that is obtained in regard to milk is invaluable. The finest laws in the world for pure milk would be as nothing, without the knowledge and equipment to keep tab on all milk sold in a city and checked up unceasingly. Samples of milk are collected regularly from the local dairymen, while on their routes, and systematic examination is made in the laboratory to determine their chemical and bacteriological contents and value for infant feeding. Examination is also made to detect any adulteration, preservatives, or coloring matter which are so detrimental to the health and life of innocent babies.

Of all the routine laboratory tests, the simple enumeration of the number of bacteria in the milk tells us most concerning its general sanitary quality. A large number of bacteria in milk means that it is old, that it has not been kept cold, or that it is dirty. The number of bacteria in milk depends upon any one of these conditions. The laboratory results, further, serve as a guide to direct the efforts of the milk inspector, and they also serve to confirm the conclusions arrived at, from an inspection of the dairies and dairy farm. Mothers, physicians, nurses, and all persons interested in infant welfare can appreciate the value of pure milk.

It did not take long to convict a man for adding formaldehyde to his milk, when the baby of the chief of police was ill from that cause. May the day be hastened when those who are in power will be just as interested in protecting the babies of the unknown mother and father as they are in their own.

Perhaps the evidence brought in from the laboratory in regard to venereal disease has been the one thing that has stood out most



Interior of a Red Cross Laboratory Car

prominently in our work. In the sanitary zone, liquor, vice, and disease are the three foes that are fought. The liquor problem is handled by the police, but vice, by both the police and health departments. Any prostitute can be taken by the police to the health office, who take smears, and in a very short time it is known positively whether that girl is diseased. If negative, she is released, if positive, she is put away so as to safeguard the soldier. In our state the law reads:

To isolate such persons whenever in the opinion of said deputy state health officer, the State Board of Health, or its secretary, isolation is necessary to protect the public health. In establishing isolation, the health officer shall define the limits of the area in which the person reasonably suspected, or known to have syphilis or gonococcus infection, and his (or her) attendant, are to be isolated. In cases of quarantine or isolation, not to terminate said quarantine or isolation until the cases have become non-infectious.

The state farm adjoins our city, so the deputy state health officer (in this case Assistant Surgeon, U. S. Public Health Service at head of the Unit), defines the farm as the place of isolation. Medical treatment is given and no one is released until three smears are taken which prove negative. A splendid woman is superintendent of this farm, and these girls are surrounded with such good wholesome environment that many have more home life than they have had for years. It is a real social work.

The water situation has perhaps made more work for the bacteriologist than any other one phase of the work. As mentioned before, a typhoid epidemic was in full sway when the Unit arrived in August, and the water, milk, and vault situations were all bad. Ninety per cent of the wells and cisterns were contaminated, hence condemned. The city water was also contaminated at that time. Tests are made every day from the pumping station, also from the tap at the laboratory, and water from every cistern and well is to be tested again this spring. With adequate vaults and milk ordinance passed and enforced, and the water problem handled through the laboratory, it is an assured fact that the health situation in our extracantonment zone will be very much improved. The work of the Unit will be justified.

During an air raid over Venice the palace in which Robert Browning lived and died was badly injured and all the stained glass windows were shattered. The palaces along the Grand Canal are closed, as much damage has been done in this part of the city by Austrian raiders.